February znd.

Another Jamaica mail arrived this morning, which left the island on the 2ist of December, at which time no account had been received of General Knox. They are very low at the Admiralty concerning it. I have been all the morning in the city, hunting for information; but there are so many contradictory reports and conjectures that I returned just as I went, except feeling my spirits depressed by the fatigue.

I assure you I keep nothing from you, nor palliate nor exaggerate; *spero contra spem*. I do all I can to resist the weight of despondency, but, indeed, I am cruelly alarmed, and prepare myself for the worst. I cannot pretend to bid you keep up your spirits, or hope or despond, for I know not what to do or to say. My thoughts are on the rack about your health, and the improbability that your shattered nerves will be able to resist such a blow as this may prove. Colonel Barry sits all day over the fire crying, and is angry if one suggests a hope. He quite kills me.

I had got so far when Mr. Higgins came in, who declares upon his honour he would not buoy me up with false hopes, but his opinion is not the least altered by the arrival of this paclcet, nor